



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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**Department of Health Cautions North Dakotans Not To Let Their Guard Down  
When It Comes to H1N1 Influenza**  
*Health Officials Urge People At High-Risk To Get Vaccinated Now*

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is strongly recommending that people at increased risk for influenza get vaccinated against H1N1 influenza now.

“Because influenza cases seem to be declining a bit, many people may think that the influenza season is ending and the worst is behind us. But past pandemics have shown us that there can be multiple waves of illness,” said State Epidemiologist Kirby Kruger. “Influenza is so unpredictable, and we just don’t know if we will get another wave of H1N1. We really want high-risk people to get vaccinated now in order to protect themselves and their families.”

Vaccine supplies are projected to increase substantially in the state during December. Some local public health units and health-care providers have now opened up vaccine for all of the high risk groups. These groups include:

- Children ages 6 months to 18 years of age.
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age.
- Pregnant women.
- Health-care providers.
- Adults ages 19 through 24.
- Adults ages 25 through 64 with underlying medical conditions such as:
  - Respiratory and lung diseases including asthma.
  - Metabolic and blood diseases including diabetes.
  - Heart and circulatory diseases.

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Visit the health department home page at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov).

- Liver, kidney, pancreatic and other organ problems.
- Immunosuppression due to HIV, cancer treatment, steroid treatment or other causes.
- Neurological/neuromuscular and cognitive disorders.

Vaccination remains the most important tool in responding to this pandemic strain of influenza. Vaccinations help by:

- Protecting those who have been vaccinated from death and illness.
- Protecting close contacts who cannot be vaccinated.
- Protecting workforces by protecting employees and their families.
- Protecting against antiviral resistance by decreasing the need to use antiviral medications.
- Protecting the health-care community from being overburdened with ill individuals and being better able to respond to other illnesses.
- Helping to prevent the virus from changing.

“As we enter the busy holiday season, please take the time to get vaccinated against H1N1 flu when it is available for you and your family,” Kruger said. “The vaccine is safe and effective and is the best way to protect against serious illness and complications from the flu.”

Health officials say people should still get vaccinated against H1N1 even if they’ve been sick in the past couple of months. Specific testing by the state laboratory is needed to confirm that a person actually has the novel H1N1 virus. Since most people will not be tested, the majority will not know whether they actually had H1N1 or some other virus.

The Department of Health also wants to remind parents that children age 6 months through 9 years need two doses of H1N1 vaccine separated by at least four weeks. That means many children who were vaccinated in October are due to receive their second dose.

To find out where flu shot clinics are being held, the public is encourage to check the flu shot clinic locator which can be found at [www.ndflu.com](http://www.ndflu.com).

The North Dakota Department of Health has activated a toll-free public health hotline for people to call if they have questions about influenza. (The hotline cannot provide medical advice to callers. For that information, people should call their physicians.) The number to call is 1.866.207.2880. The hotline is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Standard Time.

For more information, the media can contact Kirby Kruger at 701.328.2378.

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